

Message Text

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EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: ASEAN

SUBJECT: APPEAL BY SINGAPORE PRIME MINISTER FOR U.S. ASSISTANCE
IN BACKSTOPPING ASEAN ECONOMIC MINISTERS MEETING

REF: SINGAPORE 1000

1. ANY EFFORT BY U.S. AT THIS TIME TO INTERCEDE WITH
INDONESIANS ON ASEAN ECONOMIC ISSUES WOULD ENCOUNTER BOTH
PRECEDURAL AND POLICY OBSTACLES.

2. ACCESS TO SENIOR MINISTERS IN ECONOMIC FIELD AT
PRESENT MOMENT IS MADE DIFFICULT BY ILLNESS OF WIDJOJO
AND PREOCCUPATION OF OTHERS WITH PREAPRATIONS FOR KUALA
LUMPUR MEETING AND LARGE CANADIAN TRADE DELEGATION

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PRESENTLY IN INDONESIA.

3. APART FOR THAT, WE BELIEVE INDONESIANS WOULD REACT AT MINIMUM WITH PUZZLEMENT TO ANY INTERVENTION BY U.S. ON SENSITIVE MATTER AT ISSUE AMONG ASEAN COUNTRIES, ESPECIALLY IF THEY SUSPECTED WE WERE ACTING ON BEHALF OF SINGAPORE - WITH WHOM THEIR RELATIONS HAVE RECENTLY BEEN STRAINED - AS THEY MIGHT.

4. TECHNOCRATS' AVERSION TO ASEAN FREE TRADE ZONE WHICH SINGAPORE FAVORS IS ESTABLISHED AND WAS CONFIRMED TO ME TODAY BY INVESTMENT BOARD CHAIRMAN BARLI HALIM WHO MENTIONED SUBJECT IN ANOTHER CONTEXT. (HALIM SAID, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT GOI DOES NOT CONTEMPLATE THAT PRODUCTS OF PROPOSED FIVE ASEAN INDUSTRIAL PROJECTS WOULD ENJOY PRIVILEGED ENTRY INTO OTHER ASEAN COUNTRIES.) HOWEVER, I BELIEVE LEE KUAN YEW'S IMPRESSION THAT THERE IS MAJOR SPLIT BETWEEN TECHNOCRATS AND INDONESIAN MILITARY OVER ASEAN ECONOMIC COOPERATION IN GENERAL IS OVERDRAWN. INDONESIAN ECONOMIC INTERESTS BACKED BY PALACE AND MILITARY OFTEN SHARE TECHNOCRATS' FEAR OF SINGAPORE'S COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE OVER INDONESIA AND THEREFORE SUPPORT TECHNOCRATS' MERCANTILIST, PROTECTIONIST OUTLOOK.

5. IF DEPARTMENT BELIEVES WE SHOULD IN SOME WAY BE RESPONSIVE TO LEE KUAN YEW'S APPEAL, I COULD TRY TO SEEK OUT MINISTER OF TRADE PRAWIRO AND FOREIGN OFFICE'S ASEAN SECRETARIAT CHIEF UMARYADI AND LATER, IF POSSIBLE, THE NEW ASEAN SECRETARY GENERAL DHARSONO WITH WHOM I HAVE PREVIOUSLY DISCUSSED U.S. INTEREST IN ASEAN MATTERS, SEEK RUNDOWN OF ISSUES FACING ECONOMIC MINISTERS, AND EXPRESS U.S. INTEREST IN CONTINUED MOMENTUM TOWARD CLOSE ECONOMIC COOPERATION.
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